

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00  
NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 HA-05  
ACDA-12 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15  
SY-05 MCT-01 AID-05 A-01 OPR-02 OMB-01 TRSE-00  
OC-06 CCO-00 CA-01 /112 W  
-----028287 051828Z /46

O R 051718Z MAY 78  
FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN  
TO SECSTATE WASH IMMEDIATE 7234  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE  
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN  
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM  
AMCONSUL DURBAN  
AMEMBASSY GABORONE  
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG  
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO  
AMEMBASSY LAGOS  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA  
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 CAPE TOWN 907

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: MPOL, SF, WA, AO,  
SUBJECT: NAMIBIA: SOUTH AFRICA'S RAID INTO ANGOLA--AN ASSESSMENT

REF: CAPE TOWN 898,

1. WHETHER OR NOT THE SOUTH AFRICANS HAD LONG INTENDED TO  
MAKE THEIR MAY 3 STRIKE INTO ANGOLA, THEY APPARENTLY  
ANTICIPATED SUCH A MOVE AND WERE READY TO UNDERTAKE IT WHEN  
THE TIME CAME. THROUGHOUT THE PAST YEAR OF TALKS ON NAMIBIA  
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AND ESPECIALLY IN RECENT MONTHS, THE SOUTH AFRICANS AND  
SEVERAL NAMIBIAN LEADERS HAVE WITH INCREASING URGENCY EXPRESSED  
CONCERN ABOUT THE SECURITY SITUATION IN NAMIBIA, ESPECIALLY  
IN THE NORTH. MOREOVER, WE HAVE HAD INDICATIONS FOR SOME  
TIME THAT THE SAG MIGHT BE PREPARING FOR THE CONTINGENCY  
OF AN ACTION SUCH AS THAT WHICH TOOK PLACE MAY 3 (CAPE TOWN 529,  
DAO 6 880 0195 78). IN MARCH, THE SAG PUBLICIZED A

REPUTED SWAPO "TAKEOVER" PLAN (CAPE TOWN 499) AND LAST MONTH IT PRODUCED MORE "SECRET DOCUMENTS" ALLEGEDLY REVEALING SWAPO'S INTENTION TO LAUNCH AN OFFENSIVE TIMED TO THE UNGA SPECIAL SESSION (CAPE TOWN 816). WITHIN THE LAST TEN DAYS, THE SAG HAS REPORTED A SHARP INCREASE IN TERRORIST INCIDENTS IN THE OPERATIONAL AREA (CAPE TOWN 876). THE RECENT ALARM, HOWEVER, WAS NOT DRAMATIZED AS WAS THE FLURRY OF TERRORIST ACTIVITIES IN FEBRUARY, WHEN THERE WERE HIGH-LEVEL WARNINGS FROM SAG OFFICIALS, INCLUDING DEFENSE MINISTER P.W. BOTHA, INDICATING THE SAG MIGHT STRIKE BACK AT SWAPO BASES IN ANGOLA (CAPE TOWN 364). THE ABSENCE OF SUCH AUTHORITATIVE DECLARATIONS BEFORE YESTERDAY'S RAID WAS PRESUMABLY INTENDED TO AVOID ALERTING SWAPO AND THE ANGOLANS AND POSSIBLY ALSO TO AVOID STIMULATING A WESTERN APPROACH CAUTIONING AGAINST PERCIPITOUS MILITARY ACTION.

2. IT COULD WELL BE THAT THE MAY 3 INCURSION WAS A KEY CONDITION FOR WINNING THE ACQUIESCENCE OF P.W. BOTHA, DTA AND AKTUR IN SOUTH AFRICA'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE WESTERN PROPOSAL. IT COULD HAVE BEEN REASONED THAT THE RAID WOULD IMPROVE SECURITY CONDITIONS AND PROVIDE A PSYCHOLOGICAL BOOST TO THE TURNHALLE GROUP SHOULD THE WESTERN PLAN ACTUALLY BE IMPLEMENTED; IF, HOWEVER, BECAUSE OF THE RAID, THE PLAN WAS NOT IMPLEMENTED, NAMIBIAN SECURITY WOULD BE AT LEAST TEMPORARILY IMPROVED AND SOUTH AFRICA WOULD STILL BE IN A BETTER POLITICAL POSITION WITH THE WEST THAN IF  
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IT HAD NOT ACCEPTED THE PROPOSAL.

3. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT, WHILE CONTINGENCY PLANS HAD BEEN LAID FOR SUCH A RAID, THE FINAL DECISION TO GO AHEAD WAS NOT CONNECTED TO ACCEPTANCE OF THE WESTERN PROPOSAL. IN THIS CASE, THE REPUTED SWAPO ATTACKS ON THE RUACANA POWER INSTALLATIONS AND ON THE WATER PIPE LINE (CAPE TOWN 901) OR INTELLIGENCE ABOUT OTHER INTENDED SWAPO ACTIONS COULD HAVE BEEN THE PROVOCATION WITH WHICH THE MILITARY AND P.W. BOTHA WON VORSTER'S AGREEMENT TO IMPLEMENT THE CONTINGENCY PLANS. IF THIS WAS THE SITUATION, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE DECISION WAS NOT MADE BY THE CABINET BUT BY A SMALLER LEADERSHIP GROUP, PRESUMABLY INCLUDING FOREIGN MINISTER PIK BOTHA. FOURIE'S COMMENT TO UK AMBASSADOR SCOTT TODAY ABOUT THE UNFORTUNATE TIMING OF THE ACTION SUGGESTS BOTHA MAY NOT HAVE BEEN IN AGREEMENT WITH IT.

4. WHATEVER THE MOTIVATION, THE SAG UNDOUBTEDLY REALIZES THE GREAT RISK TO THE SEARCH FOR A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT. IT LIKELY HOPES IT CAN JUSTIFY ITS ACTIONS WITH PUBLIC AUDIENCES IN THE WEST. IT WILL ARGUE THAT THE RAID IS NO DIFFERENT FROM SWAPO'S CONTINUING TERRORIST ACTIVITIES AND, UNTIL SWAPO

AGREES TO THE SETTLEMENT PLAN, FIGHTING CAN BE EXPECTED TO  
CONTINUE ON BOTH SIDES.

5. IF PROGRESS WITH THE WESTERN PROPOSAL NOW ENCOUNTERS  
REENFORCED SWAPO OR SECURITY COUNCIL OBDURACY BECAUSE OF  
THE SOUTH AFRICAN RAID, THE QUESTION ARISES WHETHER THE  
SAG WILL SOON TAKE THE POSITION THAT IT CAN WAIT NO LONGER AND  
MUST MOVE AHEAD ON ITS OWN WITH PREPARATIONS FOR ELECTIONS.  
IN A ONE-HOUR INTERVIEW ON MAY 3 WITH HENRY BRADSHER OF THE  
"WASHINGTON STAR", AND SYNDICATED COLUMNIST BILL LANDRY,  
PIK BOTHA APPARENTLY HARPED ON THE THEME THAT SOUTH AFRICA  
COULD NOT WAIT "MUCH LONGER". ACCORDING TO BRADSHER AND  
LANDRY, HE MADE THIS WARNING IN THE CONTEXT OF THE "DETERIORATING  
SITUATION" IN NAMIBIA AND THE REPORTED UPSURGE IN TERRORIST  
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ACTIVITY.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 CAPE TOWN 907

6. A MOVE NOW BY THE SAG TO SET A DEADLINE FOR SWAPO ACCEPTANCE OF THE PROPOSAL OR TO TAKE OTHER UNILATERAL ACTION SUCH AS SETTING A TARGET DATE FOR ELECTIONS WOULD OF COURSE FURTHER DENIGRATE THE SINCERITY OF SAG ACCEPTANCE OF THE PROPOSAL. IF, ON THE OTHER HAND, SOUTH AFRICA WERE PREPARED TO HOLD OFF ANY SUCH MOVES, IT WOULD IMPLY THAT, WHILE THE SAG HAS SOUGHT TO GAIN A SECURITY ADVANTAGE AT RISK TO THE WESTERN INITIATIVE, IT MAY NEVERTHELESS BE SERIOUS IN ITS ACCEPTANCE OF THE PROPOSAL.

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SWAPO RESPONSE

7. PRESUMABLY THE SWAPO RESPONSE WILL EMERGE AT ITS MEETING WITH THE CONTACT GROUP IN NEW YORK ON MONDAY. WE ASSUME THAT NUJOMA WILL STIFFEN AND THAT THE POSSIBILITY OF MEANINGFUL AFRICAN PRESSURE ON SWAPO TO ACCEPT THE PROPOSAL HAS PROBABLY BEEN ERODED FOR THE NEAR FUTURE. RENEWED SWAPO AND AFRICAN DEMANDS FOR UN SANCTIONS AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA WOULD NOT BE SURPRISING. IN ANY EVENT, WHATEVER CHANCES THERE MAY BE FOR EVENTUAL SWAPO AGREEMENT TO THE WESTERN PROPOSAL COULD NOW DEPEND ON SWAPO RECOVERY FROM THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND MILITARY SETBACK IT HAS SUFFERED.

OUR STRATEGY

8. CLEARLY IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO RETURN THE FOCUS T MOVING AHEAD WITH THE WESTERN PROPOSAL. AND IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO KEEP THE AFRICANS IN LINE, MAINTAIN THE PRESSURE ON SWAPO, AND KEEP THE SAG FROM MOVING UNILATERALLY WHILE EXACTING FROM IT A PRICE WHICH WILL SATISFY OTHERS.

9. THE OBVIOUS AND MOST RATIONAL CONCLUSION TO DRAW FROM THE SOUTH AFRICAN ATTACK INTO ANGOLA IS THAT THE RAID WOULD PROBABLY NOT HAVE TAKEN PLACE HAD SWAPO ALREADY ACCEPTED THE WESTERN INITIATIVE AND THAT THE URGENCY OF IMPLEMENTING THE WESTERN PROPOSAL IS NOW MORE EVIDENT THAN EVER. WE SUSPECT THE ARGUMENT WILL NOT PARTICULARLY IMPRESS SWAPO OR THE AFRICANS UNLESS WE CAN PRODUCE MORE EVIDENCE OF WESTERN DETERMINATION TO CARRY THE PROPOSAL THROUGH AND TO ASSURE THAT SOUTH AFRICA WILL LIVE UP TO IT.

10. WE ASSUME A STRONG PRIVATE DEMARCHE BY THE FIVE WILL SHORTLY BE IN ORDER. IN ADDITION TO MAKING PLAIN THE DAMAGE DONE BY THE SAG ACTION AT PERHAPS THE MOST CRITICAL

MOMENT IN OUR DEALINGS WITH SWAPO AND THE SECURITY COUNCIL,  
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WE SUGGEST THE FIVE COULD EMPHASIZE THAT SOUTH AFRICA MUST  
(A) BE PREPARED FOR ADDITIONAL DELAY, (B) AVOID ANY UNILATERAL  
ACTION WHICH WOULD CALL ITS INTENTIONS FURTHER INTO QUESTION,  
AND (C) TAKE STEPS TO DEMONSTRATE ITS GOOD FAITH.  
NELSON

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## Message Attributes

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